

What does it Take to Design Learning that Puts the Questions of Our Learners Before the Answers?

First, Uncover their Questions

Uncovering the **questions** of your learners can take many different forms. Below is a list of approaches you could try with your learners.

- *Change the setting.* Go somewhere you don't typically meet with your learners. It could be as simple as moving from the classroom to the sanctuary or some outdoor space near the synagogue. Consider a field trip to the other locations that they live their lives (e.g. school, soccer field, grandparents homes, friends' homes, doctor's offices, grocery stores, movie theaters, airports, subway stations, parks).
- *Ask them directly.* What questions do you have about? Remember how it feels to have another person truly value the question you hold.
- *Do a Visualization.* If you can't go somewhere else, have them visualize a different location. Walk them through it step by step. Ask questions that heighten their awareness of what they might see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.
- *Role Play.* Ask your learners to step into a situation in the form of a role play. Stop the role play at certain points and have them write down a question or insight they are having at that moment.
- *Map It Out.* Have learners map out a certain part of their day or their lives. It could be a brief stretch of time – map out what happens from the moment you enter the lunch room in school until lunch is over - or a longer stretch of time – map out your favorite day of the week. Ask learners to capture the questions they have as they move from place to place on their map.
- *Photo Journal.* Have learners use digital or Polaroid or disposable cameras to capture an experience they are having. Ask them to write down a question that the photograph represents to them
- *Interview.* Create a set of questions that learners could use to interview one another around a given topic or theme. During the interview, have learners pay attention to the questions that the experience of being the interviewer is raising for them.



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Second, CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT that supports INQUIRY, REFLECTION AND MEANING-MAKING

INQUIRY

Consider what **inputs** learners need to gather to support a rich process of INQUIRY, so that learners can begin to **develop answers** to the questions you've helped them uncover. Remember that you'll need to allow time and space for learners to gather input from both Jewish and secular sources. Different age groups and different topics might warrant different types of resources. Below please find a list of possible resources.

- Primary Jewish sources – *Torah, Mishnah, Midrash*
- Modern Jewish Sources – Literature, Music, Poetry, Non-Fiction
- Historical Documents
- Song Lyrics – Jewish or secular
- *T'filot* – Traditional and Alternative
- Photographs, Painting, Sculpture, Film
- Cartoons
- G-dcast.com
- MyJewishLearning.com
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- YouTube videos
- What else?

Learners also need to gather input from the **people** in their world.

- Family, friends, teachers, clergy, older adults in the congregation or in their lives, younger members of the congregation or in their lives
- Who else might they want to hear from?

REFLECTION - On the one hand, On the other hand

With the inputs gathered you can move from INQUIRY to REFLECTION. They need to PUZZLE IT OUT. Remember that this can take different forms for different ages and for different students. Here are a few options to consider:

- Write it out – a journal entry, a letter, an article for the bulletin
- Talk it out – with a peer, a parent, a teacher
- Act it out – create a skit, do a role play
- Art it out – a cartoon, a painting, a collage, a paper midrash
- What else?



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MEANING-MAKING - A Two Part Process

Part I: And the answer is.....

At some point learners will need to identify a *working* answer to their question. What is an answer they can live with today, this week, this year? How will they represent their answers? How can you, as the teacher, communicate acceptance of their answers?

Part II: And so what...

Learners need to draw a line from the question to the answer to their daily lives. They need to identify how the answer they have developed will impact how they live in the world each day.

Keep in mind that many of the approaches to **uncovering** learners' questions can be used when the time comes for learners to test out the **answers** to their questions.

ALL TOGETHER NOW....

- How can we apply what we've learned today to our work as designers of powerful learning?
- How can this help us move our learners closer to the outcomes we've identified?
- How can we adapt what we currently do to make room for this type of learning?



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